

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
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AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 12360

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, PEPR, UR
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV'S COMMENTS IN PRAGUE ON RELATIONS WITH
THE WEST

REF: PRAGUE 1386

THE REFERENCES IN BREZHNEV'S SPEECH IN PRAGUE (REFTEL)
TO THE STATE OF DETENTE AND RELATIONS WITH THE WEST
WERE SHORT, BUT FORCEFULLY WORDED. THE FOLLOWING SEEMS
TO US TO BE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS OF HIS REMARKS
(WE ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS TASS/FBIS TEXT).
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-- GIVEN THE RECENT PUBLIC REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT,
BRZEZINSKI, AND OTHERS ON THE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES
AND TENSIONS IN RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION,
BREZHNEV'S REMARKS WERE THE REQUIRED SOVIET RESPONSE
WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE NOTEWORTHY HAD THEY BEEN
OMITTED FROM HIS SPEECH. HIS COMMENTS, HOWEVER, DO

NOT APPEAR TO BE THE DEFINITIVE SOVIET COMMENTARY ON THE SITUATION, AND WE DO NOT EXCLUDE AN ADDITIONAL, MORE DETAILED, PUBLIC REACTION IN THE NEAR FUTURE BY AN AUTHORITATIVE OFFICIAL SOVIET SPOKESMAN. WHETHER BREZHNEV WILL HIMSELF RETURN TO THE TOPIC SOON PROBABLY DEPENDS ON HIS PROGRAM OF PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND ON HOW SERIOUS AND LONG-TERM THE SOVIETS VIEW THE CURRENT DISPUTE.

-- WE ASSUME THAT THE RESTRAINED AND UNUSUALLY GENERAL NATURE OF BREZHNEV'S COMMENTS ARE MOSTLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD WISH TO HAVE FULL REPORTS AND EVALUATIONS OF THE GROMYKO TALKS AND THE RESULTS OF THE NATO SUMMIT BEFORE HAVING BREZHNEV (OR SOMEONE ELSE) MAKE A DEFINITIVE PRONOUNCEMENT.

-- OF PARTICULAR NOTE IS THE TOTAL ABSENCE OF ANY SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO INDIVIDUALS OR COUNTRIES BY BREZHNEV WHEN HE REFERS TO THOSE "POLITICAL CIRCLES" WHICH ARE TRYING TO "FRUSTRATE THE PROCESS OF DETENTE" AND "RETURN, IF NOT TO A COLD WAR, THEN AT LEAST TO A COOL WAR." THIS WHEN COMBINED WITH THE REFERENCES TO NATO AND NATO "COUNTRIES" IN HIS CRITICISM OF THE INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE AND OF THE NATO SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON, SUGGESTS THAT THE SOVIETS MAY SEE THE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES AS HAVING A GENERAL

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EFFECT ON THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE WEST AND NATO STATES, AND NOT ONLY BEING A PROBLEM IN U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS.

-- AS IN ALMOST EVERY PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENT BY THE SOVIET LEADERS ON DISARMAMENT, BREZHNEV STRIKES THE POSE OF THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS SUPPORTER OF DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL AND DISPARAGES THE MOTIVES AND POLICIES OF THE WESTERN NATIONS. THERE CONTINUES TO BE A CERTAIN RING OF DEFENSIVENESS IN THIS LANGUAGE AS THE SOVIETS ATTEMPT TO PRESENT THEMSELVES AS THE ONLY ONES TRULY COMMITTED TO ARMS CONTROL. IF THE SITUATION WERE REALLY AS SELF-EVIDENT AS BREZHNEV CLAIMS, THERE WOULD BE NO REASON TO KEEP REPEATING IT AD NAUSEAM. MATLOCK

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